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Suffering for Years. The Shocking Truth about Petunia.

Mon, 2015-03-16 15:37 — Robin Olson

Part 1 of 2

Four years ago I wrote about my cat Petunia. It was a guilt-ridden confession about how I'd missed the signals that she wasn't just a high-strung, territory-aggressive cat who urinated all over my house. Something else was causing her issues. I foolishly thought I discovered the root cause of her behavioral problems so I stopped looking for a health issue as the trigger. Up until that point I'd never given Petunia a fair shake because she drove me crazy, ruining everything in her path. She was urinating, marking and defecating everywhere. *[If you want to read this post it's [HERE](#) (1)].*

I thought her issues were due to having impacted anal glands and that her bad scent caused some of my other cats to go after her. She'd flip out, then I'd find something soiled. The cats never fought. They just charged her, but it was enough stress to cause her to inappropriately eliminate.

Once her glands were cleaned the attacks slowed, but never really stopped. Petunia saw Dr Larry, had her teeth cleaned and had some blood work done as recently as last summer. **I was under the impression she was in good health and that her behavior issues were genetic and/or stress-based. I was very wrong.**

When Petunia was young she had Struvite crystals in her urine. I knew this because her urine was pink, indicating blood. When we tested it we knew she had crystals so the simple answer was to feed her a prescription diet that would acidify her urine, dissolving the crystals (*something I would never feed now*).



©2011 Robin AF Olson. *Petunia in a long-ago relaxed moment.*

Petunia resolved her peeing issues for a time, but then I did more rescue and our cat-population began to increase. With each cat we adopted, Petunia lost a little bit more of her territory. First it was just that she stopped coming upstairs to bed. In a way I was relieved because it also meant I stopped finding urine on my 80-year old bedroom furniture.

But then her space, got even smaller. Though she stopped peeing on the banquette cushions in the kitchen (*I finally had to remove them because they were so destroyed*), she rarely ever entered the space to look out the window at the birds who were dancing around the feeders hung over the deck. The other cats enjoyed the view and one or two marked in this area most likely due to her marking first. Petunia made a huge mess and having that stop was yet another relief.



©2012 Robin AF Olson. *The best spot in the house is also the bone of contention between the cats over who rules it.*

With her space dwindling down to the living room, mostly all points behind the sofa, we knew we had to do more to help her. We'd tried all along, but with 10 cats it's very difficult to single one out and only play with that cat and only spend time with that cat. The others were curious if we gave her attention; some took over play time, some attacked Petunia if we tried to play with her.

I tearfully confessed to one of my friends that I needed help. I had re-visit the idea of re-homing Petunia. It wasn't fair to her, but with her issues and age, it would be VERY difficult to find a new family who was willing to believe that she wouldn't soil their home, too.



©2010 Robin AF Olson. *Before we added Blitz, Mabel and DOOD, Gracie and Petunia often snuggled in our bedroom. They no longer feel safe doing that.*

There also was the complication that Petunia's mother, Gracie lives here and from time to time Petunia still goes to her mother for comfort, so how am I to find a home for a 14-year old and a 12-year old cat?

I was certain this was the answer, but just as much sure that I'd never find a home for both cats. Gracie has an incurable skin condition.

I had to find a solution here, so it was back to the drawing board.

Over the past year Petunia earned the nickname: **PEE**-tunia because she began peeing on the SOFA. No matter what we did she kept doing it until I finally got a static mat and that stopped the behavior. Well, really it just encouraged her to pee

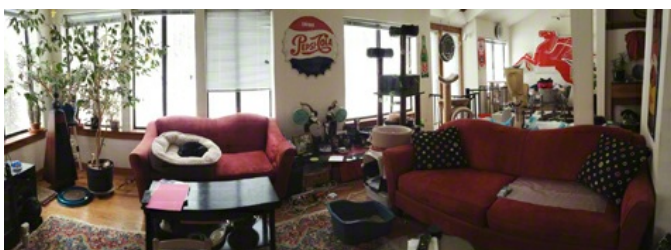
somewhere else, but it was on a cat bed I could cover with a wee-wee pad and that was something I could deal with.

Sam and I decided to make a concentrated effort to re-catify our living room, to help Petunia find her confidence, which Jackson Galaxy refers to as “cat mojo [2]” (a term I quite like). I realized that with the addition of Blitzen, DOOD and Mabel into our family came the reduction in Petunia’s living space. I hadn’t seen Petunia come upstairs to bed in years. **Her living area was getting smaller and smaller to just the few feet behind the sofa. She was too fearful to go far because the others would charge at her. We HAD to find a solution.**



©2015 Robin AF Olson. **BEFORE:** Look for the towel to see the most prized spot in the house. There's a heated pad under the towel and it's next to the sunniest window in the house. SO how could we provide more optimal locations for more cats to enjoy this area? Also the cat trees on either side of the towel are perfect for sneak attacks so they had to be moved.

One night a few weeks ago we ripped apart the areas where the cats hang out the most. We moved cat trees, did a deep cleaning and set up one of our web cams to monitor the area when we weren't around. We hoped we'd find out what was causing Petunia to avoid the litter pan when there were a few with in feet of where she was sleeping.



©2015 Robin AF Olson. You can see the static mat on the sofa where Petunia used to urinate. We added a litter pan right near the heated cat carrier where Petunia often hid but we don't believe she ever used it. The cat trees are in front of the favorite window. There aren't any where the ficus tree is because we had a cat tree there that went unused. It was moved to the favorite window area to increase vertical space.

Every day we patrolled the area, particularly behind the sofa. This is the only place where Petunia pees-and when she does it's A LOT of urine and it really smells bad. I should have known by that smell that something was wrong, but no alarm bells went off. I just grumbled, cleaned it up and looked around to see if I should move a litter pan closer or make another change that would help Petunia feel safer.



©2015 Robin AF Olson. AFTER: The day after re-arranging the space there's a lineup of cats who want to use it. Notice, the three alpha cats are on it while Cricket, a lower cat doesn't get access right now. Petunia is in the cat carrier just off screen.

Sam and I also focused on spending more time talking to, sitting with, petting and grooming Petunia and that helped soothe her to a degree, but she was still anxious around the other cats. It also didn't stop her from defecating on the table just near the sofa.

I decided that after all these years, the last remaining option was to put her on anti-anxiety meds. I thought if she could better handle stress and the cats charging her, she'd stop acting like prey, racing off, which made some of the cats go crazy and chase after her. Poor Petunia would hide on the seat cushion on a chair under a table not far from her "safe zone" every time that happened. **It happened so often I was afraid her life would be spent huddled on that chair.**

What a terrible life.



©2015 Robin AF Olson. A few days after we moved all the cat beds, I saw this. It was the first time more than one cat was on any of the beds. The far left bed is where Gracie sleeps and when Petunia most often pees (yes, even one time ON Gracie).

It's hard to describe how hopeless I've been feeling. I couldn't re-home her. It was too late. I blame myself for adding so many cats to our home, but I thought it would be all right. The other cats are fine. It's just Petunia who is so stressed by them.

Petunia had to see our vet before she was put on any medication. Dr. Larry insisted on doing a full CBC, a stool test and urinalysis before giving her anything. When I got the results my heart sank.

While Petunia's blood work was "Fantastic" (chalk it up to years of being on a raw diet) and her anal glands were fine as is and did not need to be expressed, her urinalysis was another issue altogether. Her urine had blood in it. Keep in mind that doing urinalysis with a needle (cystocentesis) often causes a small amount of blood in the urine, but she had far more than normal. She also had VERY elevated phosphorous and ammonia levels (remember how BAD her urine smelled?). It was an indicator that Petunia might have stones in her bladder.



©2015 Robin AF Olson. We lower the lights during exams so Petunia will be more relaxed. On this visit it did not help at all.

Last week I took Petunia back to Dr. Larry's for x-rays that might show us if she had stones. It was a lovely day, lots of bright sunshine, but I was struggling to hold back tears. I knew that if Petunia had stones, it would mean surgery and I asked myself how I was going to make that happen when I'm already struggling. It wasn't a good feeling. I didn't have an answer.

What do the x-rays show? Is there any hope for Petunia? Find out in part 2.

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Comments

Tue, 2015-03-17 08:15 — [Connie Kittyblog \(not verified\)](#) ^[14]

poor girl ^[15]

I flogged myself when I found out Jack was peeing because of thyroid, so I feel for you

Tue, 2015-03-17 12:41 — jmuhj (not verified)

RE: PETUNIA ^[16]

Poor Petunia! My heart goes out to her. *PRAYERS* for her wellbeing and for improvement in her health and her life.

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